



# GOOD NEWS


for the unsaved WORLD!

(#185)

Our works cannot cause salvation.

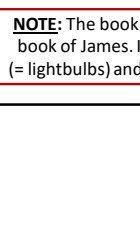
**How LIGHTBULBS express themselves.**

**How FAITH expresses itself.**



What good is it, my brothers, if a man says he has a **good lightbulb**, but has **no electricity**? Can such a **lightbulb give him light**?


Jim 2:14 (DHT)



What good is it, my brothers, if a man says he has **faith**, but has **no works**? Can such a **faith save him**?

James 2:14 (DHT)

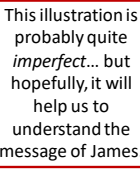
**NOTE:** The book of "Jim" is fictional, but parallels the real book of James. It illustrates the significance of how faith (= lightbulbs) and works (= electricity) relate to each other.



And if a brother or sister is in need of light, and one of you tells them,  
"Go in peace, may your path be bright;" and yet you didn't give them what they need for providing light, what good is it?  
Even so a **lightbulb**, if it has **no electricity**, is **dead in itself**.

Jim 2:15-17 (DHT)


This illustration is probably quite *imperfect*... but hopefully, it will help us to understand the message of James.



And if a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you tells them,  
"Go in peace, be warmed and filled;" and yet you didn't give them the things the body needs, what good is it?  
Even so **faith**, if it has **no works**, is **dead in itself**.


James 2:15-17 (DHT)

**NOTHING TO SEE!**



Yes, someone may say, "One person has **lightbulbs**, and another has **electricity**."  
Jim 2:18a (DHT)

**THERE, I SEE IT!**



Show me **your lightbulb works without electricity**, ...  
Jim 2:18b (DHT)


... and I **by my electricity** will show you **my lightbulb works**.  
Jim 2:18c (DHT)


Show me **your faith exists without works**, ...  
James 2:18a (DHT)

... and I **by my works** will show you **my faith exists**.  
James 2:18c (DHT)

You see then that **by electricity**, a man is **brought into the light**, and not by **lightbulbs alone**.  
Jim 2:24 (DHT)

You see then that **by works**, a man is **justified**, and not by **faith alone**.  
James 2:24 (DHT)





For as the **body** apart from the **spirit** is **dead**, even so **lightbulbs** apart from **electricity** are **dead**.  
Jim 2:26 (DHT)

For as the **body** apart from the **spirit** is **dead**, even so **faith** apart from **works** is **dead**.  
James 2:26 (DHT)

**For many people, James 2:14-26 is "problematic."**  
(It doesn't fit their views.)

- Many view this passage as a *contradiction* to other passages that say things such as...
  - ✓ We are **saved** by grace (through faith, NOT by works).
  - ✓ We are **justified** by faith, apart from works.

For you are **saved by grace through faith**, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—**not from works**, so that no one can boast.  
Ephesians 2:8-9 (CSB)

For we conclude that a person is **justified by faith** **apart from the works of the law**.  
Romans 3:28 (CSB)

★ In reality, James is looking at a *different issue*. ★

**TYPICALLY, THIS ISSUE IS DESCRIBED AS "JAMES VS. PAUL."**

**The CONTRAST:**

- **JAMES:**
  - ✓ Faith without works does *not* save (implied); it's dead, if alone; its useless.
  - ✓ Faith is perfected by working together with works.
  - ✓ Justified by works and *not* faith alone.
- **PAUL:**
  - ✓ Saved by grace, through faith, *not* by works.
  - ✓ Justified by faith, *apart from* works.

**An observation:**

- The topic of "grace" is not a part of this "conflict."

**A question:**

- Does genuine saving faith exist alone?

7

**A suggested answer.**

- We would argue that there is a *huge difference* between the "works" referred to by Paul and those by James. *Our suggestion:*
  - ✓ **Paul's focus:** "Works FOR salvation." (= It's "not an option.")
    - ⇒ We cannot earn salvation; we can only trust (have faith in) God.
  - ✓ **James' focus:** "Works BECAUSE OF salvation (or faith)." (= "It must/will happen.")
    - ⇒ If we are saved, our faith will express itself, because it's *living*, not dead.
- Note what James does NOT say (though he is often accused of it).
  - ✓ He *does NOT* say: "Salvation/justification is by works WITHOUT faith." } *There is a difference!*
  - ✓ He *does* say: Salvation/justification are not by faith ALONE.

8

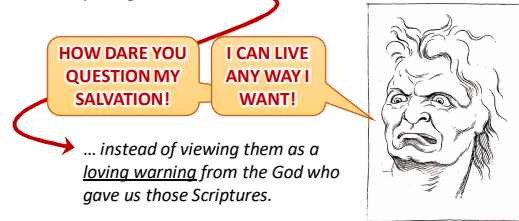
- Paul and other New Testament authors do tell us in many ways that works are NOT OPTIONAL for a person who is saved.

- ✓ Faith is described as something that is "lived." Righteous people *live* by faith (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).
- ✓ Paul mentions the "obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5). He told people that they must do works that are compatible with repentance (Acts 26:20). He also tells us to "work out" our salvation, enabled by God's power (Philippians 2:12-13).
- ✓ In Hebrews we read about the *New* Covenant that changes people's nature (Hebrews 10:16; etc.). Paul describes it as becoming a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- ✓ The New Testament often *commands* people to do good (sometimes by simply describing what must be done). These things are *never* described as "optional" or "ignore, if you wish." Scripture *never* says that "saved people can *choose* to disobey this command"! *At the same time, these things are never described as "ways to earn salvation."*

9

**CAUTION: Emotions vs. Scripture.**

- This can become a very emotional issue.
  - ✓ Many church-goers (and their families/friends) *lack* these works, even though they *claim* to be saved.
  - ✓ They are NOT different from the world in values, beliefs or actions. So they take offense, when shown these Scripture passages, ...



10

- **OUR GOAL:** To carefully look at this issue.
  - ✓ **Today:** The "God focus" – how God's actions relate to this issue.
  - ✓ **Later:** The "people focus" – what we do: works and faith, as they relate to justification and salvation.
- **Some observations about the "God focus":**
  - ✓ Whether or not we understand what James is saying, we can rest in the fact that *our salvation rests on the power of God* (and not on *our* weak efforts).
    - James is not opposing this fact!
  - ✓ Several of these verses mention *two* issues – both of which must be accepted – or we will be promoting *half*-truth, and what we say will become a lie.
    - Such verses often prove to be the most significant ones, when we attempt to understand the relationships between different concepts.

11

**GOD'S ROLE IN OUR SALVATION AND JUSTIFICATION.**

**God SAVES us.**

**It's a gift, by grace.**

- By grace – Ephesians 2:5, 8; Acts 15:11; Titus 2:11; 1 Peter 1:10.
- Because of his own purpose and grace – 2 Timothy 1:9.
- Because of God's mercy – Titus 3:5.

**How does grace accomplish this?**

- Through faith – Ephesians 2:8.
- ★ **Not** because of our deeds – 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 3:5.

**More about what God did.**

- He chose us to be saved – 2 Thessalonians 2:13.
- He is protecting us with his power, as we wait for the *future* aspect of salvation (= when Jesus returns) – 1 Peter 1:5.

12

### God JUSTIFIES us (= declares us righteous).

#### It's a gift, by grace.

- Justified by his grace – Titus 3:7.
- Justification/righteousness as a free gift, by his grace – Romans 3:24; 5:17.
- Grace now rules; the result is righteousness – Romans 5:21.

#### How?

- From God – Philippians 3:9.
- Through Jesus Christ (result: eternal life) – Romans 5:17, 21.
- Paid for by Christ Jesus – Romans 3:24.
- By his blood – Romans 5:9.

#### Not possible by human works.

- ★ If it could have come through the law, *instead of by grace*, then Christ's death would have been meaningless – Galatians 2:21.

13

### CONCEPTS THAT OCCUR IN GROUPS OF TWO.

God's grace and mercy are sometimes connected to another concept. (Both concepts must be accepted.)

In most cases, these groups of two work together. (In one case, it shows a contrast of two incompatible things.)

- God had mercy / the Holy Spirit cleaned us and made us new.

[God] saved us... because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, ...

Titus 3:5 (NIV)

- ⇒ The Holy Spirit causes changes, when a person is saved: This parallels: ① the passages in Hebrews that tell us that God embeds his laws in our hearts and minds – Hebrews 10:16, etc.; also ② the passage about God placing within us both the desire and the ability to do good – Philippians 2:13. (The obligation to do good becomes a desire to do so.)

14

- Being made holy by the Holy Spirit / our willingness to accept the truth of Scripture.

... God chose you ... to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:13b (NIV)

⇒ Holiness is connected to the need to accept the truth of Scripture: Verse 15 tells us that we have an *obligation* to hold fast to what Paul taught. This also parallels our obligation to pursue a "renewed mind" – Romans 12:2.

- Saved by grace / created to do good works.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith... not by works...

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:8a, 9a, 10 (NIV)

⇒ God saves for a purpose. This implies *obligations* on our part.

15

- The contrast between sin's rule and grace's rule.

... just as sin reigned in death, so also grace will reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:21 (NET)

⇒ Other passages remind us that our flesh (sinful nature) continues to oppose righteousness. But in Christ, *we do not have to do what our flesh demands*.

⇒ Our hearts are changed – set on going *God's way*; but our bodies are still set on going the *sinful nature's way*.

- Concepts related to what we do can also occur in groups of two. EXAMPLE: Salvation involves *more than just* "believing."

One believes with the heart, resulting in righteousness, and one confesses with the mouth, resulting in salvation.

Romans 10:10 (CSB)

⇒ Trust involves a *response*. This means you can't trust "alone." Also, if the *response* doesn't exist, *we can't* say the trust exists. [This is compatible with what James says.]

16

## < Your MISSION >

[The words *faith*, *believe*, and *trust* all express the same concept.]

- ✓ **TRUST** God for your salvation. Scripture is *clear* that you cannot succeed by your own effort – by your own works.
- ✓ **ACCEPT** what you know about James' comments. Even if you *don't* understand his comments about the relationship between faith and works, you do know: ① It cannot mean you work *for* your salvation. (It does not contradict what Scripture says about *God's* role.) ② Works are important (even if you don't understand why). Obligations are not to be ignored.
- ✓ **PURSUE** both "halves" of the "groups of two" concepts. Some of them make a connection between: ① what God does and ② our necessary response to what he does.

17

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18